



THE ARC, AAIDD, AUCD,
UCP, NACDD AND SABLE

FACT SHEET

EMPLOYMENT

Background

Working age people with disabilities are among the most unemployed and underemployed segments of our society. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that in January 2010, the percentage of people with disabilities in the labor force was 21.8% compared with 70.1% for persons with no disability. Far too many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are underemployed and earn very little money. For example, according to the Government Accountability Office, 424,000 people are earning less than the federal minimum wage and of that number about 74% are people with intellectual disabilities. According to the Census Bureau, weekly wages for people with any disability decreased from \$353 in 2000 to \$288 in 2006. Weekly wages for people with an intellectual or developmental disability decreased from \$234 in 2000 to \$188 in 2006.

In response to the slow economic recovery and continued escalating unemployment, Congress and the Administration have proposed a number of tax bills and other proposals to stimulate private sector job creation. These bills have not targeted specific groups of people who are unemployed, such as people with disabilities but have been directed at encouraging employers to create new jobs.

The state vocational rehabilitation (VR) program is significantly under funded to meet the employment needs of hundreds of thousands of individuals with severe disabilities who need VR services to obtain employment. Many individuals with disabilities could also greatly benefit from the employment and training services delivered through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) One-Stop system, though the WIA track record for serving people with disabilities is very poor. Physical and programmatic access to WIA services is woefully lacking for individuals with disabilities, despite Federal requirements that such services be accessible. In 2007, the state Developmental Disability Agencies provide day or employment supports to an estimated 566,895 individuals yet only 115,239 individuals were supported in integrated employment.

In each of the past three Congresses, bills to reauthorize WIA and VR have been introduced or discussed. A number of good provisions were included in these bills including strengthening transition services for special education students, expanding supported employment services and improving physical and programmatic access to one-stops.

Action Taken by Congress and the Administration

Legislation to reauthorize WIA and Vocational Rehabilitation has yet to be introduced in the 111th Congress. It was last reauthorized in 1998.

On the appropriations front, the President, like the previous Administration, proposed a consolidation of the Supported Employment State Grants Program and other programs with the Title I State Grant in his FY 2011 Budget Request. The proposed consolidation would provide no guarantee that the shifted funding would be utilized to provide supported employment services. The Administration also

proposed the Supported Employment Extended Services for Youth Grant program, a new competitive grant program to expand supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities as they transition from school to the workforce. The recommended funding level is \$25 million for FY 2011.

Recommendations

The Congress should:

- Expand supported employment services by funding the President's proposal to create a new competitive grant program for youth with the most significant disabilities and by opposing the consolidation of the Supported Employment State Grants program;
- Increase funding for the VR and WIA system, including dedicated funding for transition services for students with disabilities who are graduating or exiting special education;
- Place a high priority on reauthorizing WIA and VR;
- Improve transition services by strengthening the VR role in the transition from school to adult life for students with disabilities, particularly requiring VR counselors to actively participate in the IEP process.
- Assure that people with disabilities have physical and programmatic access to the WIA system;
- Assure that WIA prioritizes services to people with disabilities and dedicates funding to those services.
- Ensure that people with disabilities are fully included in any efforts to create jobs and stimulate the economy.

Relevant Committees

House Appropriations Committee

House Education and Labor (WIA and VR)

Senate Appropriations Committee

Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (WIA and VR)

For more information, please contact The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy Disability Policy Collaboration (202) 783-2229, Association of University Centers on Disability (301) 588-8252, American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (202) 387-1968, National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (202) 506-5813 or the Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (802) 760-8856.

3/30/10